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TAGS: [KCFE](#) [NATO](#) [PARM](#) [PREL](#) [GM](#)
SUBJECT: CFE: GERMANY PUSHES FOR BEING FORWARD-LEANING ON
A/CFE RATIFICATION AT UPCOMING EXTRAORDINARY CONFERENCE

REF: STATE 75293

Classified By: POLITICAL MINISTER COUNSELOR JOHN BAUMAN. REASONS:
1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) Summary: Germany believes that at the June 12-15 CFE Extraordinary Conference, a point-by-point rebuttal of Russian concerns about CFE could prove counterproductive and play into the hands of hardliners in Moscow. Instead, Germany believes that NATO should be forward-leaning and take "an orchestrated, step-by-step approach" that demonstrates to Moscow that all the Allies are genuinely committed to ratifying the Adapted CFE Treaty once Russia has fulfilled the Istanbul commitments. Germany continues to take a more restrictive view of the Istanbul commitments with regard to Russian troops in Moldova than is accepted by the rest of the Alliance. End Summary.

Favors an earlier HLTF meeting

¶2. (C) Post delivered reftel talking points June 1 to MFA Envoy for Disarmament and Arms Control, Amb. Friedrich Groening, who promised to study them carefully before next week's HLTF meeting. Given an extensive discussion of these issues with the Embassy just the day before (see below), Groening offered no substantive comments on the U.S. nonpaper, but did express concern about the possibility that the HLTF meeting may slip to Friday, June 8. With informal consultations for the Extraordinary CFE Conference beginning Monday, June 11 in Vienna, Groening was afraid that there would be very little opportunity for "mending fences" before the conference if the HLTF meeting did not go well. Therefore, he argued for holding the HLTF as previously scheduled on Thursday, June 7 and the Quad pre-coordination meeting the day before.

Engage Russians rather than rebut their arguments

¶3. (C) On May 31, prior to the arrival of reftel, Groening called in the political minister counselor and polmil chief to register concern about the U.S. approach at the previous day's Deputy HLTF meeting in Brussels. Also attending on the German side was MFA Office Director for Conventional Arms Control Michael Biontino. Based on German reporting from the meeting, Groening characterized the U.S. line as "the usual tough stuff," which he thought would be counterproductive if used with the Russians. He agreed that the six points put forward by the Russians in their diplomatic note were

basically groundless -- the first three (concerning groups of parties) will be automatically resolved when the A/CFE comes into force and the other three do not make much sense. Nonetheless, rather than rebutting the Russian arguments point-by-point, Groening thought it would be better to "engage the Russians" so we can "move forward."

Key is giving assurances on A/CFE ratification

¶4. (C) Groening claimed to have already discussed some ideas for an "orchestrated, step-by-step approach" with ISN A/S John Rood, whom he met in Washington two weeks ago, before the Russians called for the extraordinary conference on CFE. The key to success, according to Groening, is giving the Russians assurances that NATO is ready and committed to ratify the A/CFE Treaty. He claimed that the Russians are genuinely convinced that the Allies will not ratify the A/CFE, even if Moscow does everything we are demanding regarding the Istanbul commitments. According to Groening, the Russians believe the Allies are deliberately sabotaging the A/CFE because the new agreement is, on balance, more favorable to Russia than to the West. Groening argued that "different streams" of Russian elite opinion have come together to call for the extraordinary CFE conference, including many who want to use it to avoid flank limits or to get out of the CFE treaty altogether. A confrontational stance by NATO would just play into the hands of the hardliners.

Disagreement over the Istanbul commitment for Moldova

¶5. (C) We assured Groening that the U.S. too wanted to engage the Russians and to try to move forward. We pointed out that it has long been our policy to actively help the Russians meet their Istanbul commitments, for example, by helping financing the withdrawal of ammunition from Moldova. Along the same lines, the U.S. has made it clear that we are ready to work with the Russians to help internationalize the peacekeeping force in Moldova to make it acceptable to Chisinau. Groening argued that the Russian peacekeepers in Transnistria are not part of the Istanbul commitments, since their presence is covered by the 1992 cease-fire agreement which, according to Groening, remains in force and has never been abrogated by Chisinau. Only the ammunition and the Russian soldiers guarding the depot (about 500) are covered, according to Groening. Regarding the U.S. offer to help the Russians internationalize the peacekeeping force in Transnistria, Groening claimed that this was unlikely to get anywhere since, in his opinion, the Russians would never accept such a change absent a solution to the whole status issue. He thought we would never get past the Istanbul commitment issue in Moldova if we linked it to resolution of the underlying conflict.

Comment

¶6. (C) Although Groening never really spelled out his "step-by-step approach," it seems to be based on the idea that in return for the Russians making progress on their Istanbul commitments, the Allies would begin the process of A/CFE ratification, on the understanding, of course, that ratification would not be completed until the Russians have fully complied with their Istanbul commitments. Groening believes the main objective of the Russians at the upcoming extraordinary conference will be to see what the Allies are willing to do to get the A/CFE ratification process started. Groening fears that if the Allies are not forward-leaning on the issue of ratification, the Moscow hardliners could use it as an excuse to push for Russian abrogation of the CFE Treaty.

TIMKEN JR